

Host Nation COVID-19 News Stories for April 27

City wants to implement "Stricter conditions" for COVID demonstrations

During the third demonstration against the corona restrictions in Stuttgart, the applicable distance rules were not observed. Now the city wants to tighten the regulations and look for a larger venue for the event.

Stuttgart - The demonstration against the current corona regulation on Saturday at the Schlossplatz in Stuttgart will have a repercussion. Because the distance rules were not observed by participants in many cases, therefore, the city wants to tighten the regulations for further rallies of this kind and have to choose a larger square.

It was the third demonstration of this kind that took place on Saturday at the Schlossplatz. The IT entrepreneur Michael Ballweg also registered for this demonstration. He is of the opinion that the Corona regulations endanger fundamental rights. The previous times 30 to 40 people had followed the call. A demonstration with up to 100 participants was again registered with the city of Stuttgart. For this number, the size of the Schlossplatz was considered sufficient, even if the distance rules were observed.

However, much more people attended, than anticipated. In fact, according to the police, between 350 and 500 people attended, and, they often lacked distance. There had been "violations of the distance rules", said a police spokesperson. He did not give more precise details, they had not been counted. "But there were some", said the spokesman.

The police, however, did not intervene against the persons in question. They had only "taken photographs". Moreover, the officers on site had "had contact with the leader of the meeting". The latter, however, had "not been able to influence the participants to keep the distances", explained the police spokesman. And according to the agreement, one policeman had to be necessary for every ten participants in the rally.

Stuttgart's mayor for public order, Martin Schairer (CDU), briefly summarized the situation on Sunday: The organizers were "overwhelmed" by the crowd, Schairer said when asked. The city does not want to let the incidents go. It is simply not possible that under the current conditions of the Corona pandemic, a rally would be held in such an "uncontrolled manner", stresses Schairer. Presently, demonstrations "like in old times" are not possible to take place. The current rules of distance must be strictly adhered in order not to jeopardize the current measures against the virus.

Search for a larger square

This is also in line with the position of the Federal Constitutional Court, Schairer noted. Background: The state capital had rejected the registration of the first demonstration against the Corona measures with the reference that the ban was based on the state's Corona Ordinance. The Federal Constitutional Court, however,

has granted an emergency appeal against the ban, which violates the plaintiff's basic right to freedom of assembly.

Martin Schairer has now announced that the city will "tighten the restrictions" on further demonstration petitions and seek a larger venue for the event. Among other things, Schillerplatz is apparently under discussion.

In Berlin on Saturday, despite a ban on demonstrations, about 1000 people protested against the restrictions due to the Corona crisis. Some of them were standing close together, and there were over 100 arrests. (*Stuttgarter Nachrichten*, April 26)

Customer traffic lights control numbers, create required distance

Up to now, retail security services have often regulated access to the shop. A system developed by Steinbeis researchers has passed its test. It uses traffic lights to regulate the flow of customers.

Stuttgart - The digital system has passed the practical test for access control so well that Christof Tenta from the Organix Biomarkt in Stuttgart-Feuerbach does not even want to return the two steles that are standing at the store entrances, they will stay. Just like traffic lights with red or green, "stop" or "go", they give customers the appropriate signal for "compliant" shopping. After two days in the last week, it became clear where there is still room for improvement, but above all that, apart from a few insecure customers, the majority fully supports the counting and checking procedure. The Ferdinand Steinbeis Institute (FSTI) has addressed the question of how access controls and purchasing processes using digital technologies can meet the requirements of the Corona regulations, particularly at its second location, the Heilbronn education campus, in addition to Stuttgart. The Steinbeis Institute has also accompanied the test in the biomarket with a scientific survey.

Now that quite a number of shops have reopened after the shutdown of the past few weeks, the question is that and how the respective access restrictions, hygiene and queuing requirements can be met by digital control. The Stuttgart organic market selected for the test had to fulfil a number of criteria, in particular that its management was open to the new access technology, that there are separate entrances and exits in the store and a separate entrance to the butcher's and bakery, as well as a "self-service section that is difficult to view and monitor" and also a "congestion risk", for example at the cheese service counter and the vegetable counter.

Technically, the control system works in such a way that the two pillars at the entrance register the customers by light barrier, count them and then display either "go" or "stop". In addition, employees can intervene via an app if long queues have formed on busy shopping days or in the "congested areas". An additional access monitoring by a 3D camera on the two test days showed where and how further interventions are necessary, the keyword here being "inhomogeneous distribution". This showed, for example, how useful it can be to create "strict one-way streets" as

walking paths and separate entrances and exits. An important advantage was also that the system is self-explanatory, i.e. customers could understand it without instruction. More than just a side effect, which was also confirmed by the Stuttgart test: The use of security personnel is no longer necessary, but only on very busy days. Christof Tenta, who can now do without it, is also pleased about this. *(Stuttgarter Nachrichten, April 26)*

Fitness studios want doors open as members are getting impatient

Kreis Böblingen While the restrictions in many areas of life are gradually being relaxed these days, the doors of the fitness studios remain closed. Many operators feel left out. They stress that fitness training is more important than ever. Actually, we had hoped that we too would be allowed to open again on Monday," says Marvin Fräßdorf. His family runs the Fitness Express studios in Sindelfingen, Böblingen, Renningen and Vaihingen. He is convinced that this would have been possible. "Our studios are all large enough to comply with the distance rules," he emphasizes. *(Boeblinger Kreiszeitung, April 26)*

Stern Center's gradual opening returns normality to Sindelfingen shopping

In order to recover a bit more normality the shops in the Sindelfingen Stern-Center have gradually reopened. According to the order of the Baden-Württemberg's State Government, the shops in the Stern-Center Sindelfingen are to reopen step by step, taking all protective and hygienic measures into account.

The center management is asking customers to observe the prescribed contact rules when entering the shopping centre and to visit the Stern-Center Sindelfingen exclusively for the purpose of shopping. *(Boeblinger Kreiszeitung, April 22)*

Campfire gets out of control

MAGSTADT. A thick black waft of smoke was visible from afar over the Gewann Rot on Saturday afternoon, whereupon several people called the fire department via the emergency call 112. The first emergency services on site determined that it was an unattended campfire in a garden plot. Various rubbish and tyres were burning in a fireplace; the fire had already spread to the surrounding undergrowth, trees and underbrush before the fire department arrived. A fire-fighting operation was quickly initiated with a rapid attack by the fire-fighting group vehicle and tanker fire-fighting vehicle. After a short time, the fire was extinguished and was checked with the thermal imaging camera. In addition, the surrounding area was watered to prevent it from flaring up again. The Magstadt fire brigade was on duty with 23 firefighters. *(Boeblinger Kreiszeitung, April 26)*

Austria plans to approach tourism with caution

Austria's government has assured that the country will be "cautious" with summer tourism for foreign guests. Cross-border tourism would "only be possible again in a careful and gradual manner", Foreign Minister Alexander Schallenberg told the newspaper "Bild". In addition, only tourists from countries that are as advanced in the fight against the coronavirus as Austria and have similarly low infection rates would be considered for entry. Federal Foreign Minister Heiko Maas (SPD) also warned of a European "race" to reopen the tourism branch. (News channel Ntv April 27, 2020)

Liechtenstein uses Corona bracelet

In order to detect possible coronavirus infections, researchers in the Principality of Liechtenstein want to equip 2200 volunteers with biometric bracelets. The organizers announced that the so-called COVI-GAPP study will show whether the wristbands can detect corona infections at an early stage. The study is being carried out by the pharmaceutical company Dr. Risch Gruppe and the Swiss start-up AVA, which developed the bracelet. The bracelets are normally used to monitor the fertility cycle in women. The bracelet measures skin temperature, pulse, respiratory rate and blood flow of the wearer. First results of the study are expected in the fall. (News channel Focus April 27, 2020)

Deutsche Bank states thousands cannot afford to pay off loans

The Corona crisis is leaving its mark on the private client business of Deutsche Bank. According to the bank, tens of thousands of clients are asking for deferral of their loans because of the current pandemic. "In the first two weeks after the law came into force, almost 50,000 customers asked us to defer their payment obligations arising from loans. In a good half of the cases, this involved mortgage financing, the other half were consumer loans," says Manfred Knof, head of the Private Client division of Germany's largest financial institution, in an interview with the "Handelsblatt" newspaper. The bank has already processed and approved most of the applications. (News channel Handelsblatt April 27, 2020)

After lockdown - New start: Headquarters of Volkswagen produces in start-up mode

For one and a half months, the coronavirus shut down the largest factory in the world. Now the VW headquarters in Wolfsburg is starting the Golf again. For the employees, however, many things are different than before. The Prime Minister has barely arrived at Gate 17 when he has to make a self-experiment in Corona times. "Now this is a basic course on how to drink coffee with masks on," says Stephan Weil.

Volkswagen resumes production at its headquarters in cautious steps at the beginning of the week - after almost one and a half months of lockdown due to the virus crisis. Zwickau, Bratislava, practically all Chinese plants are back on the scene. Today, Emden and Hanover are also to be added. "We have converted everything that is important to ensure the safety of our employees," emphasizes Group CEO Herbert Diess. "We are now starting up very slowly." As in Zwickau, however, capacity in Wolfsburg is still limited: this week at a maximum of 15 percent, by the end of next week at around 40 percent. About 8000 employees have returned - usually up to 70,000 people work here. 2600 suppliers have also resumed production.

In order to prevent infections with the corona virus, VW relies on equalization: The production line runs at half speed for the time being, so that fewer employees have to be in a confined space. The joint 10 o'clock break is no longer necessary, explains plant manager Stefan Loth. Instead, the employees take their breaks separately. From the team rooms, the lockers have been carted out of the door so that they can be reached by everyone despite the limited number of employees in the rooms. In addition, everyone is encouraged to measure their temperatures at home before starting the working day.

These days, anyone who is already on the assembly line will find a completely revamped working environment. On the one hand, there is the obligatory mouth and nose protection at stations where the minimum distance of 1.5 meters cannot be guaranteed. Everywhere there are markings on the floor, walking paths have been diverted, and posters with hygiene instructions hang on the walls. At points where closer contact is unavoidable, the Group relies on the use of "spit protection": tables are divided in the middle with Plexi panels and individual workstations on the production line are separated with thick films, work can be carried out from the left and right at the engine compartments, and a partition wall is located in the middle. Sometimes, however, a simple plastic foil in which keyboards and mice are wrapped is also used.

It is clear that the way back to normality will also take a while in Wolfsburg. "We must be aware: We have not yet overcome Corona," warns personnel director Kilian. There is an obligation to constantly ensure that the number of cases does not rise again. In a letter, Osterloh prepares the workforce for the upcoming challenges associated with the new, unfamiliar protective measures: "This is a board, but there is no other way, because we all want to stay healthy. (News channel Stern April 27, 2020)

Germany provides 750,000 euros in emergency aid for the homeless

"Stay home" is one of the commandments today to slow down the spread of the corona virus. How do you do that if you don't have a home? The Corona crisis hits the homeless particularly hard. They live on the streets, have no place to retreat, and often important protective measures such as washing their hands are a problem. If they are accommodated in emergency shelters for a short time, they usually share the room with other people. Keeping their distance is difficult. In addition: not all shelters are open 24 hours a day.

"The risk of infection with the coronavirus is particularly high for people living on the streets. With our emergency aid programme for the homeless, we are giving these people a safe retreat and protection in these times," said Health Minister Manne Lucha on Monday (27 April) in Stuttgart.

With the "Emergency Aid for the Homeless", the state provides financial support to municipalities and city and county councils to find additional suitable facilities that provide emergency overnight accommodation and are open during the day to stay. Municipalities and city and county councils have already become active here. They can now submit applications for financial support. For this purpose, a total of 500,000 euros is available. Applications for emergency assistance are available at <https://t1p.de/antrag-soforthilfe-obdachlose>. In addition to the support for more facilities, the state government is providing a further 250,000 euros for the care of homeless people under an agreement with the League of Non-State Welfare Services.

"Only by providing more emergency overnight accommodation and more room to stay can the prescribed distance rules and hygiene regulations also be met. Only in this way we can provide better protection for the particularly vulnerable group of homeless people. With the emergency assistance, we are also supporting the municipalities in Baden-Württemberg and the city and local districts in coping with their tasks at the same time", the Minister continued.

The Corona pandemic poses a major challenge to the institutions and services of the homeless. On the one hand, they should be there for those affected, but on the other hand, this is not possible or only possible to a limited extent due to current restrictions and for the protection of employees. In many places, food distribution points, clothing stores and washing facilities for the homeless had to be closed.

"We want to support the institutions that help all the people in the country who are in greatest need under the most difficult conditions and provide them with the most essential necessities. I would like to thank all these institutions very much", said Minister Lucha. This is about the crisis-related safeguarding of the existential basis, not about a replacement of social services. These social services are still guaranteed. The exact needs and support services will be determined in consultation with the institutions and services of the homeless assistance.

Background information

Many people at risk of or affected by homelessness are medically unsupported or have multiple illnesses. They belong to a particularly vulnerable group of people and in corona times to the risk group.

According to information from the Baden-Württemberg League of Non-Statutory Welfare Services, almost seven percent of all women and men cared for in the homeless assistance facilities had no accommodation on the 27th September 2019. That was 809 people. In addition, a significantly higher number of people in hidden homelessness are assumed to live in precarious housing conditions and, for example, with people they know or friends. Homeless women in particular are affected by such situations, which often lead to strong dependency in relationships. *(Press release Stuttgart April 27, 2020)*